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COMMENTS

THE ROLL OF HONOR

The American Water Works Association has reason to feel well satisfied with the part its members have taken in the work of winning the Great War. Our Roll of Honor speaks in the language of Patriotism. Our Engineers have constructed the pipe lines and supply works providing water for our armies and for the cantonments, arsenals, and housing projects. Splendid work—valuable beyond estimate—has been done by our Chemists and Bacteriologists in the field, under most difficult and heartbreaking circumstances, and in the camps abroad and at home.

We cannot do enough to honor the men who have sacrificed so much to do their patriotic duty and we look forward to the time when we may meet with them and hear the stories of their achievement.

CHARLES R. HENDERSON.

THE TENDENCY TO WANT SOMETHING NEW

An antique or a novelty awakens immediate interest. The nearer an antique approaches the field of archaeology, the wider is its range of interest, probably because it thereby becomes a novelty to an increasingly large circle. The appeal of something new evokes a response in mankind at an early age and manifests itself thereafter in various forms and degrees. More or less acute recollection will doubtless attest the universal popularity of a new girl in a small

town, or in a small section of a large town, the size being limited only by the zone of operations of the girl. With due apologies for mentioning a girl and an antique in the same paragraph, there are certain practical lessons to be drawn from this tendency to want something new.

The symptom sometimes shows itself in decreased interest in keeping a certain apparatus at a maximum pitch because a desired, but perhaps unattainable device, is supposed to be capable of yielding a little better result. The wish for the new article may be the starting point for extended inefficiency, the excuse for which is hidden in the appeal for the wished-for appliance. Visiting operators are liable to return to their own plants with a predominating impression that either they have seen certain machines better than any they possess, or else that they possess better machines than any they have seen.

Perhaps there has not been sufficient emphasis placed on the standards which should govern the determination of whether to purchase or not to purchase a new article. Possibly we should deny ourselves a change until we can conscientiously say that we are already obtaining the utmost out of what we now possess. Such a standard might have interesting results on the operating force as well as on the manager or superintendent.

There must necessarily be various standards of achievement, but high rank belongs to the one who has made the best possible use of the appliances at his disposal, irrespective of the actual returns when compared with those from other appliances. In papers, discussions and publications, there is a tendency to give prominence, perhaps undue prominence, to the new things. A feeling of natural pride dictates this course and a similar feeling of natural reluctance retards the presentation of accomplishments with old and so-called out-of-date equipment. In these days ninety per cent of everything is out-of-date, and an improved appliance is on the market before an original has the paint worn off.

Invention and progress must needs be, but the inclination toward such ends can be over-developed along the mechanical rather than the human side. Labor is to be more costly than ever, but labor-saving efforts may produce large returns if directed towards better utilization of existing equipment through minds influenced to feel satisfied with such equipment, within, of course, reasonable limitations.

CARLETON E. DAVIS.